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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this booklet is to provide strategies to help general and special education teachers, speech and language pathologists, school counselors, para-professionals, and administrators plan for and implement co-teaching during reading instruction in classrooms where a variety of learners are represented, including students with disabilities. The content of the booklet was influenced by current research on co-teaching and inclusion, a year-long sustained conversation with four co-teaching teams, and observations in over 70 co-teaching classrooms. Sections of the booklet address what co-teaching is; what collaboration is; the critical components of reading instruction during co-teaching; critical features of reading instruction during co-teaching; components of co-teaching during reading instruction; top 10 issues and possible solutions for co-teaching during reading instruction; what administrators can do to facilitate co-teaching; and how to get started with co-teaching. (Contains 25 references.) (RS)

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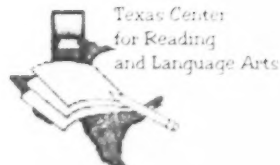
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Coordinating for Reading Instruction: General Education and Special Education Working Together

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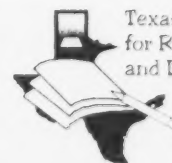
Texas Education Agency
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Purpose of this booklet

The purpose of this booklet is to provide strategies to help general and special education teachers, speech and language pathologists, school counselors, para-professionals, and administrators (e.g., principals, special education coordinators) plan for and implement co-teaching during reading instruction in classrooms where a variety of learners are represented, including students with disabilities. For further reading on any of the information presented, please consult the reference section.

The content in this booklet has been influenced by current research on co-teaching and inclusion, a year long sustained conversation¹ with four co-teaching teams, and our experience from observations in over seventy co-teaching classrooms.



¹ Four elementary special educators representing three local school districts were selected from district and regional recommendations. Each special education teacher chose a general education co-teaching partner to participate jointly in this project. The focus group (consisting of the eight teachers and four university researchers) met five times to discuss co-teaching and inclusion. Each teacher was interviewed individually at the beginning and end of the school year and classroom observations were conducted. In combination with empirical evidence and information from observations in many inclusion classrooms, we have tried to include both the successes and challenges of teachers who are currently practicing co-teaching in their classrooms. We would like to acknowledge the time and commitment of these teachers who have helped us provide practical information that relates to actual classrooms with students who have a wide range of academic and behavioral needs.

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What is co-teaching?

Co-teaching occurs when general and special education teachers work collaboratively to teach students who represent a range of abilities, including students with disabilities, in the general education classroom (Bauwens,

Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Effective co-teachers work together as partners. Both teachers take part in planning, teaching, and evaluating students' performance.

Research note

On effective co-teaching

Effective co-teachers:

1. Are tolerant, reflective, and flexible.
2. Accept responsibility for all students.
3. Maintain positive relationships with each other.
4. Adjust expectations for students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Adapted from Olson et. al, 1997

What is collaboration?

Collaboration is the key to co-teaching. It is an interactive process that enables teachers with diverse expertise to provide quality services to students with a range of academic and social needs, including students with disabilities, in the general education classroom (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 2000; West & Idol, 1990).

Message from the classroom

"We go together like peanut butter and jelly. Often in class we're so in sync, we finish each other's sentences... And the kids see that. They see us working together and it helps them learn to work together."

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Collaboration involves:

- **Shared responsibility:** Maintaining mutual responsibility for the students in the class; territorial boundaries ("my students" - "your students") are not prevalent.
- **Reciprocity of ideas and teaching:** Sharing in planning, instructing, evaluating, and decision-making; each professional has an equal voice.
- **Problem-solving:** Developing a variety of possible solutions by using reciprocity and shared responsibility.
- **Interactive communication:** Using techniques such as active listening (e.g., paraphrasing), speaking in common nonjargon language, and employing positive nonverbal communication to increase productive interactions.
- **Conflict resolution:** Engaging in a process used to address issues; conflict is neither "good" nor "bad," but inevitable.

O
Research note
O

On effective co-teaching

In a three-year study of effective co-teaching teams, general education and special education teachers reported increased:

1. Academic and social gains for students with disabilities,
2. Opportunities for professional growth,
3. Professional satisfaction, and
4. Personal support.

Adapted from Walther-Thomas, 1997

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What are the critical components of reading instruction during co-teaching?

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) outlines five essential components of effective reading instruction.

Phonological awareness: Understanding that sentences are made up of groups of words and individual words are made up of a sequence of separate sounds.

A child's phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of learning to read (Blachman, 1991; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Word identification: Using letter-sound correspondence (knowledge of the sounds that letters and letter combinations make); structural analysis (the ability to separate a word into meaningful units, such as roots or base words, prefixes, and suffixes); syllabication (the process of separating words into appropriate decodable groups of letters); and semantic cues (relationships of words or groups of words) to decode a word.

Research supports explicit instruction in decoding, with practice in stories that "fit" a child's reading level (e.g., Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilconson, 1985; Bryant et al., in press; Cunningham, 1995).

Fluency: Developing oral reading rate, accuracy, and prosody.

Students should know the purpose for reading (i.e., topic, key words), should have many opportunities to read silently and out loud, and should have individual fluency goals that are frequently monitored (e.g., Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1998; Sindelar, Monda, & O'Shea, 1990).

Vocabulary: Increasing word knowledge and improving the use of semantic and context clues in a variety of literature sources to determine word meaning.

Many of the new words students learn throughout the year are acquired from meaningful experiences, from being read to, and as they read on their own (Beck & McKeown, 1991).

Comprehension: Teaching strategies to increase understanding before, during, and after reading.

Comprehension is enhanced not only by identifying words quickly and automatically, but also by the ability to develop meaningful ideas from groups of words, drawing inferences, and relating current reading to prior knowledge (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Vaughn & Klingner, 1999).



What are the critical features of reading instruction during co-teaching?

1. **Instructional materials:** Effective teachers access a wide range of reading materials at various levels to meet the specific needs of students. During explicit instruction, beginning readers use manageable, decodable text. In order to develop reading skills, students who do not read on grade level may benefit from high-interest/controlled vocabulary reading materials. In addition, these students may also use grade level reading materials for activities such as comprehension building and vocabulary development.
2. **Delivery of instruction:** When introducing a lesson, effective teachers use advance organizers and activate prior knowledge. During instruction, they provide explicit content presentation, model "think alouds," check for understanding, and give corrective feedback. In order to meet the needs of students with diverse learning needs, teachers use scaffolding techniques to guide understanding, adjust the pacing of a lesson as needed, ensure that students are on task, and provide frequent opportunities for students to respond and to practice new skills.
3. **Instructional grouping:** Grouping is one of the few alterable instructional formats that can influence, either positively or negatively, student engagement and academic progress (Maheady, 1997).

Alternatives to whole group instruction include:

Large groups – A class is divided into two or three groups of approximately 8 – 12 students.

Small groups – A class of students is broken up into several groups of three to seven students at varying levels (heterogeneous) or at approximately the same level (homogeneous).



One-to-one – A teacher provides explicit instruction to one student, individualizing goals and instruction.



Flexible groups – By altering grouping formats, students do not get “stuck” in the same group for extended periods of time. Teachers can group students based on the specific purpose and goals of a lesson and / or the needs of the students. However, students who are below grade level in reading require explicit instruction and benefit from working in teacher-led small groups with students who are at a similar skill level. Teachers balance this necessary homogeneous grouping with other grouping formats when flexible grouping is utilized (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 1999).

Pairs – Two students work together without a teacher instructing them directly. Teachers act as facilitators, moving among groups to monitor students’ progress or to provide mini-lessons.



4. **Student progress monitoring:** To track student mastery of instructional objectives, effective teachers use weekly record keeping (graph, checklist) procedures. Instructional decisions are based on evidence (or lack of evidence) of students’ progress. For more information on progress monitoring, see the *Monitoring Students’ Progress* section on page 25.



What are the components of co-teaching during reading instruction?

1. Establishing a co-teaching relationship

- Entry
- Negotiation
- Setting Demands

2. Identifying individual students' needs

- Understanding students' strengths and weaknesses

3. Planning for instruction

- Finding time to plan
- Grouping considerations
- Co-teaching models
- Planning the lesson

4. Monitoring students' progress

- Purpose
- Procedure
- Use of data
- Sample objectives



1. Establishing a co-teaching relationship

Steps for getting started

Entry

Create the co-teaching team.

Negotiation

Establish co-teaching goals, expectations, and roles.

Setting Demands

Develop a shared understanding of classroom expectations and students' needs.

Entry: One of the most difficult parts of co-teaching can be gaining entry into another teacher's classroom. Many co-teachers come together because they share common interests in or outside the classroom. Often teachers report having similar instructional styles, curricula backgrounds, or compatible personalities. Co-teachers do not simply co-exist in one classroom. Teachers must be willing and able to work together.

Message from the classroom

"My co-teaching partner and I enjoy working together, have compatible teaching styles, and feel comfortable discussing differences."

Negotiation: As soon as the team is established, the general education and special education teachers work together to develop co-teaching goals, expectations, and roles. Co-teachers may ask themselves, "What are the objectives of co-teaching and how will we know if we are meeting those objectives?" Some co-teaching teams write out goals at the onset and review and revise them periodically. Many teachers find it useful to attend professional development sessions together prior to co-teaching.



Decision-Making

How will discipline be handled when we teach together?

Whose materials will we use?

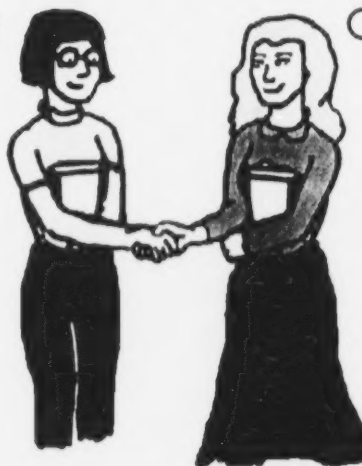
How will we manage recordkeeping?

How will we communicate with parents?

How will we coordinate instruction?*

Are we both responsible for all students?

General education teacher becomes familiar with the IEPs of students with disabilities.



Special education teacher becomes familiar with grade level curriculum and classroom expectations.

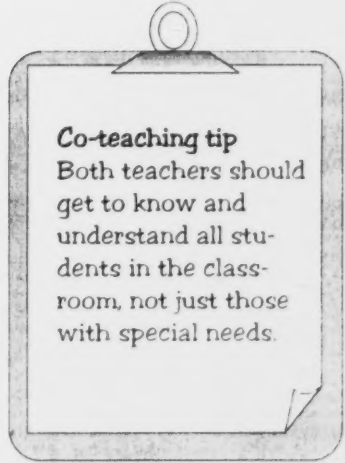
*See *Planning for Instruction* section that begins on page 16 for more information.

Setting Demands: Co-teachers share an understanding of grade level curriculum and classroom requirements as well as teacher expectations. Just as the general education teacher may learn new modifications to work more effectively with diverse learners, the special education teacher may find it useful to observe a co-teacher's classroom, discuss teaching styles and preferences, and seek professional development opportunities to broaden her knowledge of the curriculum.



2. Identifying individual students' needs

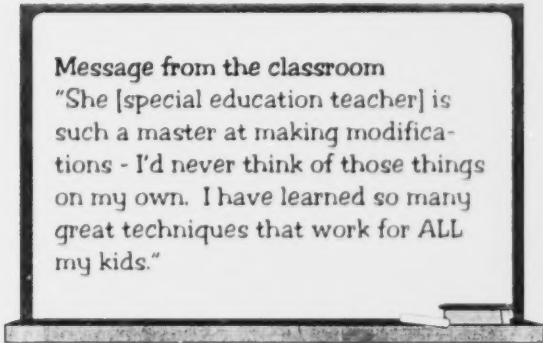
The central purpose of co-teaching is to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Although objectives may vary depending on the curriculum area and specific lesson, co-teachers first work together to develop a shared understanding of their students.



Co-teaching tip
Both teachers should get to know and understand all students in the classroom, not just those with special needs.

Understanding students' strengths and weaknesses:

- ✓ Read and discuss IEPs for students with disabilities.
- ✓ Develop student goals for accessing the general education curriculum.
- ✓ Consider modifications needed for each student to access the curriculum.
- ✓ Discuss potential problems and possible solutions before they arise in class.



Message from the classroom
"She [special education teacher] is such a master at making modifications - I'd never think of those things on my own. I have learned so many great techniques that work for ALL my kids."



3. Planning for instruction

Finding time to plan: Find time to plan together. Co-planning is most effective when teachers have a designated time to plan. Planning is of great concern in elementary schools where planning periods are often broken into small segments (Walther-Thomas, 1997) or when teachers do not share a common planning time.

Message from the classroom

"I'm convinced that if co-teaching is going to work it takes a systematic approach, and the only way you're going to get that is through planning... You can't just whisper [what the lesson is about] in the ear of the special education teacher as she walks in the room."

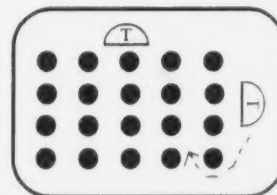
Co-teaching models: Within the models for co-teaching discussed on the following pages (Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997), teachers are able to utilize a variety of grouping techniques. Many teachers use a combination of models that vary depending on students' needs and instructional goals (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989).



Model A: One Group

One lead teacher

One teacher "teaching on purpose"



Student grouping: Whole class

Teacher roles: One teacher takes the lead in instruction
One teacher provides "on purpose" instruction

"Teaching on purpose" is giving short lessons to individuals, pairs, or small groups of students during or as a follow-up to whole group instruction.

1-2 minute purpose: Approach students after instruction to follow up on key ideas and concepts, encourage participation, answer questions, check for understanding, or review directions.

5-minute purpose: Review concepts and vocabulary or check for understanding.



Co-Teaching Tip
Many teachers in co-teaching situations end up spending their time *grazing*, going from student to student to make sure they are following along. "Teaching on Purpose" is a method of checking for understanding and providing short installments of explicit instruction that are related to key ideas, concepts, or vocabulary from the main lesson. Teachers often keep a running log of information given to special education students during "Teaching on Purpose" as one source for monitoring students' progress.

10-12 minute purpose: Provide a mini-lesson on a skill that is related to the main lesson (e.g., how to find the main idea). This format is often used to teach explicitly a reading skill, such as learning the sound of letters and blending the sounds together to make words.

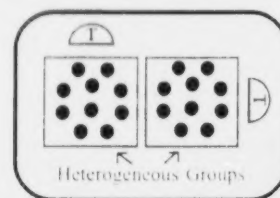


Model B: Two Heterogeneous Groups

Two teachers teach same content

Student grouping: Two large groups

Teacher roles: Each teacher instructs one group



This method is often used as a follow-up to Model A. In Model B, the class is divided into two heterogeneous groups with each teacher instructing one group. The purpose of this co-teaching model is to provide a large number of opportunities for students to participate and interact with one another and to have their responses and knowledge monitored by a teacher.

Many teachers use this co-teaching format during the discussion of a novel that is being read by the class.

Co-teaching tip

Because the discussions will vary by group, many co-teachers bring the class back together for a short wrap-up to share unique perspectives and to summarize key points. Students love to share what their group has learned.

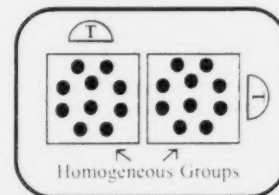


Model C: Two Homogeneous Groups

Teachers teach different content

Student grouping: Two same-ability large groups

Teacher roles: Each teacher instructs one group



Students are divided into two groups, based on their skill level in the topic area. One teacher re-teaches while the other teacher provides alternative information or extension activities to the second group.

Students' skill levels for the specific content to be taught, not overall reading ability, is the criterion for group membership. Although reading ability and skill level may be the same, especially for students with disabilities, there are many students for whom this is not true. For instance, a reader with poor decoding skills may have stronger comprehension skills. In a lesson on finding the main idea, this student may be in the extension group, while several more fluent readers require re-teaching.

Co-teaching tip

In effective co-teaching, the general education teacher does not always assume the role as lead teacher, nor does the special education teacher always re-teach. Teachers share responsibility and alter roles from one lesson to the next. Co-teachers find it most satisfying to teach to the full range of abilities represented in the classroom.

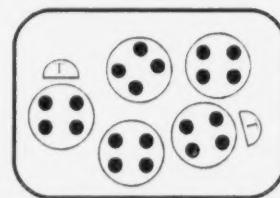


Model D: Multiple Groups

Teachers monitor/teach

Student grouping: Groups may be homogeneous or heterogeneous

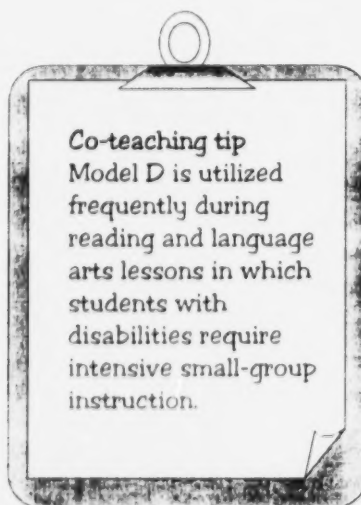
Teacher roles: Each teacher monitors and/or teaches



Model D is often used during cooperative learning activities, reading groups, and learning centers. Students may move between workstations or may be assigned to work in a designated area.

Grouping suggestions:

- Several groups may be heterogeneous while one or two are homogeneous. One or both teachers work with individual groups for the entire period.
- Several small groups (e.g., groups of four or five, pairs) work on a variety of literacy activities while the remaining groups work on activities to improve specific reading skills. Teachers monitor progress and provide mini-lessons to individuals, pairs, or small groups of students.
- Students work in small groups or pairs and teachers monitor progress.



Co-teaching tip
Model D is utilized frequently during reading and language arts lessons in which students with disabilities require intensive small-group instruction.

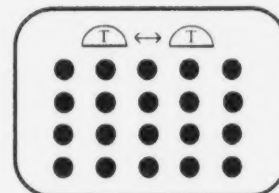


Model E: Whole Class

Two teachers teach together

Student grouping: Whole class

Teacher roles: Teachers work together to teach a whole class lesson

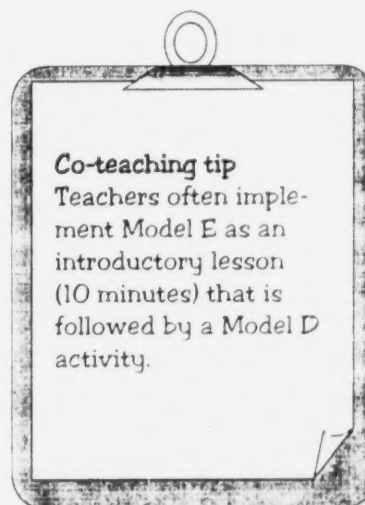


Model E is perhaps the most difficult model of co-teaching. Many co-teachers wait to try this model until they have had experience working together and feel comfortable with each other's teaching styles.

In this model, teachers work cooperatively to teach a lesson. One teacher may lead the whole class lesson while the other teacher interjects with elaborations, comments, and questions to clarify the material. Often the general education teacher provides curriculum material while the special education teacher adds strategies to help students with disabilities remember key ideas and organize information.

In a second grade classroom we observed, the teachers spent 10 minutes at the beginning of class modeling problem solving techniques and steps to conduct a cooperative group activity in which students would work together to read and solve mysteries.

Decide together what lesson or unit will be taught, being careful to consider general education curriculum requirements as well as the individual needs of students with disabilities as they are specified on the IEP.



Planning the lesson: Using a co-teaching lesson plan helps teachers organize roles and instruction for co-teaching. Special lesson features might include co-teaching techniques and considerations for individual student needs. The following pages contain examples of elementary and secondary co-teaching lesson plans as well as a blank lesson plan for you to use.



Elementary Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Example

Ms. Mania and Ms. Summers have been co-teaching for several years. There are two students with disabilities in the class, Roger and Sandy. Here is an example of several reading lessons the teachers taught together during a unit on animals.

General Educator: Ms. Mania

Special Educator: Ms. Summers

Date	Lesson content	Co-teaching model	Specific teacher tasks	Materials	Evaluation	Modifications*
4/3	Literacy Discussion	Model B: Two mixed-ability groups	Teachers lead separate discussions on the class reading of <i>Charlotte's Webb</i> . In each group, teachers and students write comprehension questions. Students call on volunteers to respond to their questions. Teachers interject throughout the discussions, making sure all students have a chance to ask and answer questions.	-Students' copies of <i>Charlotte's Webb</i> -Discussion journals	-Evaluate discussion journals -Monitor participation	-Assist Roger in formulating a response to share with the class. -Remind Sam to pause first to organize thoughts before responding
4/4	Literacy Groups	Model D: Three mixed-ability groups Two skill groups	Students are divided into three heterogeneous groups and two skill level groups (at their reading levels). The teachers each work with one of the two lower groups to provide explicit instruction in word analysis. The other three groups of students work independently in cooperative learning activities to complete literacy assignments.	-Students' books -Reading logs	-Chart number of words decoded correctly	-Ms. M. mini-lesson on r controlled vowels -Ms. S. re-teach syllabication strategy for decoding
4/5 and 4/6	Animal Centers	Model D: Students grouped by interest (each group has chosen an animal to research)	Ms. S works at the <i>Vocabulary</i> center with Roger's group. She then follows his group to the <i>Animal Word Game</i> station and provides a word building mini-lesson. Ms. S remains at the word building station and provides a word building mini-lesson to Sandy's group. Ms. S monitors Sandy's participation as she plays a student-directed game with her group. Ms. M monitors the remaining groups.	-Center activities	-Monitor group work -Evaluate students' work in word building	-Roger works with a partner instead of in a foursome -Sandy brings behavior contract to stations
4/7	Animal Research	Model C: Two groups One re-teach	Ms. S works with students who are ready to begin research while Ms. M re-teaches students who need assistance to develop plans for their individual research projects.	-Step-by-step research planners	-Evaluate planners	-Julie and Sam paraphrase steps before writing -Roger uses a graphic organizer to conceptualize the final product

*Students with or without disabilities may require modifications.

Secondary Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Example

Ms. Ralla and Mr. Cane have been co-teaching for several years. There are four students with disabilities in the class: Robin, Liz, Jack and Ryan. Here is an example of several reading lessons the teachers taught together during a unit on To Kill a Mockingbird.

General Educator: Ms. Ralla

Special Educator: Mr. Cane

Date	Lesson content	Co-teaching model	Specific teacher tasks	Materials	Evaluation	Modifications*
4-1	Literary Discussion	Model B: Two mixed ability groups	Both teachers lead discussions introducing the novel <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> . In each group, the teacher shares a personal story about when s/he was judged unfairly. Students then share personal experiences and fill out "You can't judge a book by its cover" chart as a group. Teachers introduce the novel.	"You can't judge a book by its cover" chart	Monitor and evaluate participation	Remind Robin to pause first to organize thoughts before responding. Ask Jack to paraphrase teacher's story. Seat Liz near teacher.
4-4	Class reading	Model E: Whole class Teaching together	Ms. R and Mr. C review prejudice discussion. Mr. C reads aloud the first chapter of the novel while students follow along in individual copies. Ms. R interjects questions about vocabulary words that may be problematic for students' comprehension. Students fill in reading logs while both teachers monitor and assist.	Student books Reading logs	Monitor participation Evaluate reading log	Jack and Jorge use computers to complete all written assignments. Robin works with partner to produce a joint reading log.
4-7	Literacy groups	Model D: Three mixed ability groups Two skill groups	Heterogeneous groups read Chapter 2, use discussion guides to review chapter, and then complete individual reading logs. Ms. R's group begins by discussing key vocabulary from the chapter and then reads in pairs while she monitors. She leads a discussion and students complete individual reading logs. Mr. C reviews Ch 1 with his group. They read a summarized version of Ch 2 with lower level vocabulary. Mr. C leads a discussion and students complete reading logs.	Student books Reading logs	Ms. R and Mr. C work with lower skilled groups	Mr. C: Robin, Katy, Joe, Ricky Ms. R: Jorge, Steven, Lidia, Marta, & Kurtis
4-8	Letter writing	Model A: One group Teaching on purpose	Mr. C gives directions for a letter writing activity (letter to Scout). Mr. C monitors work while Ms. R works on fluency and decoding with three small same ability groups (10-12 min each).	Letter writing guide	Record fluency progress on student charts. Evaluate letters	Robin follows modified letter writing guide to assist her in working independently.

*Students with or without disabilities may require modifications.



Co-Teaching Lesson Plan

General Educator _____

Special Educator _____

Date	Lesson content	Co-teaching model	Specific teacher tasks	Materials	Evaluation	Modifications



4. Monitoring students' progress

Purpose: Progress monitoring is used to determine how students are performing in relation to the curriculum and instruction that are presented daily. Frequent informal assessment techniques are implemented to monitor instructional and IEP objectives. A key goal of progress monitoring is to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and intervention techniques. Students whose teachers collect and record data and use the data to make instructional decisions show more academic progress than students whose teachers do not follow these progress monitoring procedures (Fuchs, 1986).

Procedure:

1. Choose a measurement system that is sensitive to the objective (e.g., rate is the measurement system and reading fluency is the objective).
2. Use materials that are comparable (i.e., same level of text).
3. Measure students' progress two to three times weekly.
4. Collect and record data (e.g., charting).
5. Make instructional decisions based on data.

Use of data: If students are failing to proceed at an adequate rate, increase the intensity of instruction by spending more time providing explicit instruction, decreasing the group size, or changing the materials or instructional method.

Sample objectives for reading instruction:

The student will...

- Make sound-symbol associations for designated letters.
- Read words fluently that contain a particular pattern in isolation.
- Read a leveled passage with desired reading rate and accuracy (one-minute timing).
- Use designated decoding strategies to read unknown words.
- State the main idea.
- Read text at designated level and summarize orally.

Co-teaching tip

- Teachers' accuracy in judging students' progress increases when they use progress monitoring procedures consistently.
- When co-teaching, one teacher can chart the progress of individual students while the other teacher facilitates group work.



Top ten issues and possible solutions for co-teaching during reading instruction

1. Find time to plan:

It is optimal to have at least 45 minutes a week to co-plan. In the beginning, teachers may use a half-day or more to make long range plans. Planning is the most frequently raised issue in co-teaching. Without time to plan, teachers are not able to coordinate instruction, plan for individual students, or resolve differences.

Message from the classroom

"It really comes down to planning. We didn't have time to discuss the curriculum so we never knew until the middle of a lesson that we had a different idea of what was best for the students. Now that we plan together, we are able to coordinate instruction."

Work with your principal to establish time. Be creative. Some schools rearrange special area time; utilize teaching teams to cover classes; or make use of resources such as parents, volunteers, and university students.

2. Designate space:

Designate a workspace for each teacher, as well as a place to store materials. If co-teaching occurs all day, it is ideal to move into a new classroom together to avoid "turf" issues.

Message from the classroom

"Every day when I came into class the table I used was covered with her [general education teacher] stuff. It definitely sent me a message." After deciding together on an area that could be used daily by the special education teacher, the feelings of invaded space disappeared and both teachers were able to concentrate on their students.



3. Assign grades together:

Effective co-teachers become familiar with standards and accountability for all students. They discuss, check, and assign grades together. Many co-teachers also choose to hold teacher-parent conferences together whenever possible.

4. Communicate with students and parents:

Students and parents need to be informed about co-teaching. Without sufficient information, parents may believe incorrectly that the pace of the class will be slowed down when students with disabilities are included. Students need to understand how the team approach will work. Effective co-teachers:

- Provide an information sharing session at the beginning of the year for parents so that they learn about the co-teaching arrangement, the benefits of this approach for all students, and how the needs of all students will be met. Provide examples of co-teaching models so that parents can see that regardless of their student's level, instruction will be tailored accordingly.
- Put both teachers' names on correspondence (i.e., field trip forms, back to school night notices, volunteer requests) that goes home with students.
- Explain the benefits of co-teaching for all students.
- Tell students that two teachers will be able to spend more time helping all students learn.

5. Manage the classroom together:

In the beginning, co-teachers talk explicitly about classroom management styles, standards, and teachers' roles. If adjustments are made in management systems, make sure the students understand the changes.

Message from the classroom

"We never send anything home unless it has both of our signatures on it. Now our parents feel like they can talk to either of us about their child."



6. Attend professional development workshops on co-teaching:

Whenever possible, it is advisable that general education and special education teachers attend co-teaching workshops together to sharpen and refine their skills in this area. Attending workshops as a "team" provides opportunities to learn information together. Para-educators also should be invited to these co-teaching workshops if they are part of the co-teaching partnership. In addition, administrators can benefit from learning more about the factors that facilitate the success of co-teaching.

7. Identify and limit the number of students:

Selecting students to be part of an inclusion classroom is key for successful co-teaching. When students with special needs are assigned to general education classes, consider the degree of disability presented by each student to ensure that the needs of all students can be met in the general education class.

Remember, many co-teaching partnerships involve the special education teacher spending a portion of his or her day in various general education classes. This arrangement implies that when the special education teacher moves on to the next general education classroom, the general education teacher is left alone to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. Therefore, it is imperative that the number of students with special needs who receive instruction in each general education class be considered carefully to ensure that teachers can meet the needs of all students throughout the school day.

Message from the classroom

"In one class we have six students with disabilities and in another class, we have only two - but their needs are much greater. It really depends on the kids..."

When co-teaching partnerships involve the special education and general education teacher working together in the same class all day, then it is possible to increase the number of students with special needs in that class because two teachers will be present throughout the day to meet the needs of all students.



8. Manage the schedule:

There is a limit to how many different classrooms and grade levels special education teachers can effectively manage. When planning for inclusion, make sure to balance the needs of the students with the reality of the teaching situation. Although this is often a staffing issue, ideally a special education teacher does not have to divide time among more than three general education classrooms or between more than two grade levels.

Message from the classroom

"I co-teach in a 3rd grade, 5th grade, and Kindergarten classroom as well as seeing several pull-out students. The general education teacher has to realize that we can't always be equal partners. If I go on a fieldtrip with my 3rd class, I'm not there for my other students. I just can't be everywhere at the same time."

9. Provide support for the general education teacher when the special education teacher is not present:

Support should be given to general education teachers to meet the needs of students when the special education teacher is not present in the class. First, in some cases, para-educators may be assigned to students with special needs. Second, resources such as materials and instructional adaptations should be made available to assist the teacher. Third, the general education teacher can use student-mediated instructional arrangements (e.g., cooperative learning, peer tutoring).

10. Identify and address conflict:

Conflict is unavoidable in any collaborative situation. However, specific issues are less important than the methods used to resolve them. As long as teachers have open lines of communication and discuss differences when they arise, co-teachers can work together effectively. By using a problem-solving approach (i.e., problem identification, solution identification, implementation plan, evaluation of the plan), conflict can usually be resolved in a mutually acceptable manner. We have seen the lines of communication break down most frequently when teachers do not have adequate time to plan together or when they fail to discuss issues when they first arise.



What can administrators do to facilitate co-teaching?

Co-teaching is most successful with administrative support. Co-teaching seems to work best when administrators support teachers in the following ways:

1. Provide time for teachers to plan.
2. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to learn about co-teaching, collaboration, and conflict resolution.
3. Make resources (e.g., personnel, materials) available to help teachers individualize instruction and address students' needs.
4. Support general education teachers when special education teachers are not present.
5. Schedule special education teachers into general education classes for blocks of time in which co-teaching will be most effective.
6. Pair general education and special education teachers who can work together effectively.
7. Limit the number of students with special needs in general education classrooms, particularly when the special education teacher is only in the classroom for part of the day.
8. Ensure that parents understand the dynamics of co-teaching.
9. Be aware of and be responsive to staff and student needs as they change over time.
10. Recognize that other service delivery options (e.g., pull-out programs), in addition to co-teaching, may be necessary to meet the individual needs of all students.



How do we get started with co-teaching?

Based on information from teachers and administrators, the following advice is provided for initiating co-teaching:

1. Start small—one or two teams (general education and special education teachers) can initiate the process the first year.
2. Select teachers who have a “track record” of working well together and who want to co-teach.
3. Select students with special needs with whom the teachers have worked and have some educational history.
4. Integrate planning time into teachers’ schedules.
5. Attend professional development with a co-teaching partner.
6. Discuss the objectives of co-teaching with the parents of all students in the classroom.
7. Begin with two to three co-teaching models until a comfort level with these new practices has been established.
8. Ensure that teachers have sufficient blocks of time in the class together so that different co-teaching models can be implemented.
9. Collect student progress monitoring data to assist in decision-making about the effectiveness of instruction.
10. Conduct periodic evaluations of co-teaching procedures. What is working? What is not working? How can co-teaching be improved?



Put the "CO" in CO-TEACHING





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